

Improving men's health benefits us all

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This is the final issue of the first volume of the *Journal of Primary Health Care (JPHC)*. Having started the journal with an empty kete,* we now have an abundance of original New Zealand research to feast on, and will soon need a rua kumara† to store the remainder of this year's harvest. The response to the journal has been overwhelming and we are truly grateful to the large number of researchers from wide-ranging disciplines who are choosing to submit their work to the *JPHC*.

One of the most pleasing aspects of the journal is the academic debate it is engendering. This is not only the *Back to Back* columns in each issue.¹⁻⁴ *Letters to the Editor* this month continue Gilmer and Gorman's discussion about the roles of nurse practitioners and general practitioners (GPs),³ the evidence-base for acupuncture is fiercely contested, and Hong† et al's paper on prescribing of aspirin and statins in rest-homes⁵ has fuelled further discussion on giving cardio-protective drugs to the elderly.

This issue has a men's health focus. The health of our men contributes greatly to the health of our nation. Overall men have a poorer health status than women and use our health services less frequently. They die earlier than women and more of their deaths are avoidable.⁶

A number of research papers address these issues. Jatrana and Crampton examine the relative under-utilisation of general practice services by men, which cannot be accounted for by gynaecological and obstetrical conditions nor women's excess in visits in the child-bearing years,⁷ while McKinlay

and colleagues explore the possible barriers inhibiting men from using general practice.⁸ Sandiford demonstrates that the disparity in life expectancy between men and women has been reducing, and discusses how this trend may be continued.⁹ Barwell describes his own practice's initiative of proactive invitations for well men checks.¹⁰

The men's health theme is continued by urologists Smart and Tulloch going *Back to Back* on prostate specific antigen (PSA) population screening for prostate cancer.⁴ *Charms and Harms* deals with saw palmetto, commonly employed for treatment of benign prostatic hyperplasia (read to find out whether the evidence supports its use). Baldwin's book *Healthy Bastards*, an accessible guide for the everyday Kiwi bloke, is reviewed and a guest editorial explains why encouraging men's awareness of, and attention to, health issues is vital for our society as a whole.

Men's health is by no means the only item on the agenda for this issue. Turner and colleagues have developed a model for viewing all components of the cost of providing childhood immunisations. They have shown that the current government subsidy does not provide adequate reimbursement, with each immunisation being delivered at a net cost to the practice.¹¹ A Christchurch study looks at GP and practice nurse knowledge and attitudes about the human papillomavirus (HPV) and HPV vaccines.¹² On a completely different tack, another Christchurch paper explores linking the National Health Index (NHI) to general practice and other data sources to reliably contribute to a district database.¹³

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* Maori flax basket

† Sweet potato storage pit

‡ See Errata

An improving performance paper shows another way of using available electronic data. Clinical data from practice management systems can allow benchmarking of usual care by practices, and provide a standard against which to measure quality cycle improvements. In this case, a benchmark for gout control was determined using the proportion of patients with well-controlled serum uric acid and then this was used to trial a mail and phone intervention to improve gout control.¹⁴

These are just some of this issue's offerings. Given the depth and breadth of papers spanning diverse aspects of primary health care which are now awaiting publication in the *JPHC*, readers can anticipate a wide array of articles. Volume 2 therefore is unlikely to be themed; rather an exciting assortment of contributions are in store for our 2010 readers.

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Errata

The name of the first author of the paper *Use of aspirin and statins for cardiovascular risk reduction in New Zealand: the residential care story*. *J Primary Health Care*. 2009;1(3):184–189 is Jae Hong not Hoem. Corresponding author Prof. Ngaire Kerse sincerely apologises for this error.

The String of PEARLS are based on the PEARLS developed by Prof. Brian McAvoy. Our apologies for not acknowledging his contribution in the September issue.



A tribute to Pat Farry

It was with great sadness that we learned of the sudden death of Pat Farry on 9 October 2009. Pat was the rural general practitioner representative on our *Journal of Primary Health Care* Editorial Board. Although he had been threatening to retire, Pat was working as a rural GP until the day of his death. New Zealand rural practice is indebted to the contributions he made to education and to practice. Pat was a Distinguished Fellow of the RNZCGP, a senior lecturer in the Department of General Practice in the University of Otago in Dunedin, and was recognised for his services to rural medicine with a New Zealand Order of Merit in the 2009 Queen's Birthday Honour's list. An inspiration to us, Pat is sorely missed.